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DANGEROUS CHINESE MISPERCEPTIONS: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DOD



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**DANGEROUS CHINESE
MISPERCEPTIONS:
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INTRODUCTION

A strong bilateral relationship between the United States and China is needed to expand areas of cooperation, *reduce the potential for misunderstanding* and encourage China's full emergence as a responsible member of the international community. (emphasis added).

Madeline Albright, January 8, 1997,
Statement to U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee

The evidence from an extremely large number of cases indicating that decision-making elites have been the victims of misperceptions is virtually overwhelming. What we know from these cases is that in a sizeable number of instances, *elite misperceptions appear to have played a crucial role in the decision to go to war. What we don't know, and perhaps can't know, is why these misperceptions occurred. . . . Operational codes play a crucial role in the chain of events leading to war. . . .* Peace will come when operational codes change, when realpolitik (and other hard-line) approaches to foreign policy are discredited, when our images of others change, when leaders learn to break out of conflict spirals, and when war is finally seen as unethical, improper, immoral, and illogical. (emphasis added).

Greg Cashman, *What Causes War?*

China is acquiring the political, economic and military power to reassert its self-defined traditional Middle Kingdom role in Asia. Under these circumstances perceived threats to territorial integrity and sovereignty strike at the foundation of national identity. After "a century of shame and humiliation" the sense of self held by the regime can be emotionally challenged by such threats. *Emotional responses can result.* (emphasis added).

Allen S. Whiting, "The PLA and China's Threat Perceptions,"
" *The China Quarterly*, June 1996

China's balance-of-power perspective has direct operational consequences...The problem with Beijing's view is that it isn't shared elsewhere in the region (where) the forward presence and military predominance of the U.S. is a reassuring symbol of predictability, peace and stability. This view is shared not only by Tokyo, Seoul and Washington, but also by Hanoi, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, and even New Delhi. *The paradox is that the more China moves to create what it regards as a "balance" of power, the less favorable will be the outlook for stability.... The U.S. should be prepared to check the misuse of power by China* (emphasis added)."

Charles Wolf, Dean of the RAND Graduate School of Policy Studies in *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, December 3, 1996.

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This report presents selected findings from a longer study¹ about three questions:

- How do China's leaders view the future security environment?
- How do China's military leaders view the potential revolution in military affairs?
- What are the implications for the U.S. Defense Department of these Chinese views?

The principal finding to be discussed in this report is that China's leadership holds a number of dangerous misperceptions that may well cause serious political friction or even military conflict with the United States. It is important for American officials who deal with the Chinese government to be aware of these misperceptions, and it may be possible in the years ahead to reduce them. If this proves to be impossible, Chinese misperceptions should be taken into account in defense planning, including program analysis as well as modeling and simulation. In other words, it would be wrong to see China as a mirror image of the United States in studying either China's approach to future defense planning or in analyzing China's future potential for using force to resolve disputes. Two DOD activities may be affected by a survey of Chinese misperceptions:

- Long-term defense planning including design of plausible scenarios for defense guidance
- The expanding program of military-to-military engagement with China.

¹ The sources for the larger effort are more than 100 Chinese books and articles about future warfare and the future security environment, and 60 interviews with Chinese military officers conducted during four visits to Beijing in 1995-1996. Four other products of this research are *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, published by National Defense University Press, a second collection of 40 translated Chinese articles on the future security environment, a study entitled *Chinese Strategic Assessment: Institutions and Premises*, and a paper entitled *China and the Revolution in Military Affairs*.

DANGEROUS CHINESE MISPERCEPTIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

While U.S.-China relations were going well, there was little reason for DOD to examine China's perceptions because Chinese leaders seemed realistic and seemed to share a common viewpoint with the United States. Only a decade ago, DOD approved lethal weapons for sale to China and even hosted Chinese military officers as students in the management course under the program for Foreign Military Sales at Wright Patterson Air Base, Ohio. However, in March 1996, when the United States deployed two carrier battle groups in the area of the Taiwan Straits and branded China's missile-firing exercises there as "reckless," China was quite surprised.

Assuming misperceptions can be identified, three types of actions are possible:

- Identify measures to reduce Chinese misperceptions in peacetime.
- Develop hedges against military actions China may take based on misperceptions.
- Educate DOD officials and military officers about Chinese misperceptions.

This report is an initial diagnosis that attempts to identify how five sets of Chinese perceptions may affect the areas of responsibility of the Department of Defense.²

² Unfortunately, many China experts are so sympathetic to China's great culture and civilization that they tend to assume that Chinese leaders have no misperceptions. This is perhaps one reason why the small field of China studies in the West has yet to produce counterparts to the many excellent critical studies of Soviet perceptions that were available in the 1970s and 1980s such as: Allen Lynch, *The Soviet Study of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press; R. Judson Mitchell, *The Ideology of a Superpower: Contemporary Soviet Doctrine on International Relations*, Hoover Institution; 1982, Jerry Hough, "The Evolution in Soviet World View," *World Politics*, July 1989; William Zimmermann, *Soviet Perspectives on International Relations*, Princeton University Press, 1971

DANGEROUS MISPERCEPTIONS

It is useful to group together Chinese misperceptions in five areas, each of which has different consequences.

- *Overestimating U.S.*

hostility to the PRC. Chinese authors seem obsessed with the notion that the United States is actively trying to subvert their government and dismember their nation. In general, an exaggerated perception of any opponent's intentions can lead to unnecessary efforts to increase one's military

capability to protect oneself from hostile intentions that the rival nation supposedly possesses. We already see evidence that China considers a future war with the United States sufficiently plausible to be openly discussed. Worse still, Chinese military books and journals in the 1990s have begun to discuss the necessity of taking preemptive military action against a more powerful opponent in certain circumstances.

- *Overestimating U.S. military weakness.* In general, inaccurate perception of the balance of military power has been thought to be a source of war. Several case studies have shown that national leaders who initiate threats do so from overconfidence in their relative military advantage. Nations presumably do not start wars they believe they will lose. Yet scholars have suggested that a perception of military advantage is a necessary condition for war initiation or for threatening "brinkmanship" and refusing to back down from a military threat. Chinese publications in the past decade have portrayed the United States as militarily weak. After the Gulf War in 1991, Chinese military authors stated the United States barely defeated Saddam.

- *Overestimating the future rate of decline of the United States.* The consequences of multiple misperceptions may be combined in a kind of multiplier effect. China not only overestimates U.S.

5 DANGEROUS MISPERCEPTIONS

- Overestimating U.S. Hostility
- Overestimating U.S. Weakness
- Overestimating U.S. Decline
- Underestimating Costs of War
- Regional Miscalculations

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hostility and underestimates U.S. military capability, but also assumes inaccurately that the United States will lose its status as the sole superpower in the next two decades. China believes other nations also know about the coming U.S. decline to a co-equal status with many other powers, and therefore few nations will want to accept U.S. leadership or ally with the United States in wartime. This misperception could generate an expectation of U.S. compliance or surrender to firm Chinese demands, especially in a crisis over an issue of supreme importance to China like Taiwan's political status. In December 1996, a book published by the Academy of Military Science predicted that the United States would be unable to keep its lead in military technology beyond the next decade or so because the nature of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) will work against military innovation in the United States. As early as 1988, a Chinese military team published a book asserting that China could surpass U.S. military technology within twenty years. Similarly, a book published in 1987 by one of China's best known international security experts agreed with the findings of a U.S. Defense Department study that China's economy would grow to the size of the U.S. GNP by about 2020.

- *Underestimating the costs and risks of future wars involving China.* To some world leaders, warfare is now obsolete and unlikely. This is not China's view. In general, international attitudes towards warfare over the centuries have varied from the belief that early war is inevitable to the opposite belief that future war would be irrational, unprofitable and unlikely. Chinese authors expect many "local wars" in the next two decades, perhaps some as large as the Korean War in 1950 or the Gulf War in 1991. There is a sense that it is normal and legitimate to use force to resolve international disputes. This misperception too could be part of a future multiplier effect in a crisis. Traditional Chinese statecraft concerning the value of using force contributes to these misperceptions.

- *Underestimating the reactions of third countries to China.* Chinese authors seem caught up in feelings of martyrdom and past humiliation at the hands of more powerful nations since the Opium War in 1840. In general, China does not understand the fears of its neighbors regarding its rise as a military power; this, too, can be

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expected to generate miscalculations. For example, Chinese authors inaccurately assess all of China's neighbors to have superior weapons to those of China. Chinese anticipate the eventual withdrawal of U.S. military bases and forward military presence from Asia. They claim that the United States is manipulating the threat perceptions of nations that host U.S. forces against China in a desperate and doomed American effort to continue a forward presence in Asia. Beijing's authors have charged for 3 years that the United States is "whipping up a China threat" to create a necessary pretext to maintain a forward military presence.

CHINESE PERCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE: AN OVERVIEW

China under Deng Xiaoping earned a widespread reputation for pragmatism, for embracing Western concepts, and for abandoning Marxist ideology, but this reputation may not extend to the area of Chinese national security perceptions. Chinese secrecy makes it difficult to be confident about this subject. There is no doubt China is pragmatic and realistic about some subjects. It has attracted \$100 billion of foreign direct investment (second only to foreign investment in the United States), twenty times more than democratic India and ten times more than Russia. Yet when it comes to national security issues, many observers have noted that China is extremely secretive, which makes understanding difficult and subject to the biases of the observer who may hope or wish to see evidence of Chinese pragmatism, when in fact it is not there.

China uses a peculiar framework to assess the future. It has its own vocabulary and its own institutional framework. That framework is neither Soviet-style Marxist-Leninism nor a world view based solely on traditional Chinese statecraft, but an amalgam of Leninism, traditional (even ancient) Chinese statecraft and some modern elements accompanied by a remarkable capacity to change radically. The current Chinese strategic assessment which has been in place since 1982 seems to be changing especially since 1991. China's current assessment bears little resemblance to the era of Chairman Mao in the 1950s and 1960s. The assessment Deng Xiaoping put forward in the early 1980s did not include two features which became prominent after 1991: the

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implications of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) and the forecast of a multipolar world by 2020 made possible by the inevitable decline of United States military power.

Since 1991, some Chinese military authors have described specific U.S. military weaknesses and forecast that after two decades the superpower status of the United States will end. This PLA assessment of current weakness and future decline of U.S. military power has been reinforced by Chinese civilian authors who forecast a sharp decline in the future U.S. diplomatic role in the 21st century as multipolarity opens up the potential for new alignments and "partnerships." The devaluing of U.S. power is accompanied by peculiar and frequent references in military books and the prestigious journal *China Military Science* to the importance of ancient Chinese statecraft, especially to the early centuries of Chinese history when several warring states adroitly manipulated a balance of power until one state achieved primacy and assumed the name "China." Both the challenge of new military technology and the need to use traditional Chinese statecraft feature in this story of the founding of China; both are often mentioned in the 1990s, when Chinese authors address the 21st century. An important example is *America, Russia, and the Revolution in Military Affairs*. This book by two officers at the Academy of Military Sciences argues that the United States will at first successfully innovate during the initial decade of the RMA, but later the United States will be surpassed by one (or more) vigorous nations. They explain that the United States will ultimately lose its status as a military superpower because it will fail to exploit the RMA for several reasons including:

- American military arrogance growing from the Gulf War will inhibit fundamental innovation, especially in the area of new operational concepts which are crucial for an RMA.
- Information technology and other new military technologies will be universally available through commercial enterprise and cannot be restricted by the U.S. government, so the United States will lose its current advantage.
- Smaller defense budgets have historically produced more innovation than the giant U.S. budgets will.
- "Measures of effectiveness" tend to drive innovation, and nations other than the United States are experimenting more in

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this area even when they have to buy weapons from more advanced nations.

ASSESSING FUTURE U.S. NATIONAL WEAKNESS:

A PREVIEW

Some Chinese authors have treated the question of America's future extensively as they analyze the future security environment. As stated above, it is therefore important to know the baseline of how China assesses the U.S. today. As described, Chinese authors assert the following points about current U.S. weakness:

- The United States barely won the Gulf War.
- Saddam could have won with a better strategy.
- The United States today cannot "contain" Chinese power.
- The United States is unable to execute its two MRC military strategy.
- The United States has only a 30 percent chance to win a war in Asia.
- U.S. munitions cannot damage deep underground bunkers (like China's).

China's views of the future security environment project a sharp decline in the global role of the United States. In a tactful manner, Chinese authors forecast that U.S. decline will enable the inevitable rise of a multi-polar system based on "comprehensive national power" which will be shared equally among five major powers. The Chinese assert:

- Predictions of inevitable U.S. decline to one of five powers.
- Japan, European Union, Russia, and China will each equal the United States.
- The United States, Russia, and China will have nuclear equivalence.
- U.S. "digitization" and networking of its armed forces cannot be completed until the mid 21st century.
- The United States will be involved in regional wars in the 21st century.
- The cause of war will be "hegemonic" nations who are trying to improve their "spheres of influence" including the United States, Japan, the Europeans, Russia, and smaller regional "hegemons" like India, Vietnam, Central Asia.

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- China will have to use force to protect its sovereignty.
- Warfare may be drastically changed by a revolution in military affairs that is now underway, according to one school of authors.

Overall, this future security environment seems to imply that China can face any security threat through "Local War" preparations including rapid reaction ground forces, very limited purchases of fighter aircraft and naval ships from Russia, and a purported defense budget only 1.5 percent of GNP.

Instead of focusing on current threats, some Chinese authors assert that the most challenging threats will emerge after two or three decades when the very nature of warfare will change radically for the major powers. Thus, in the meantime, a flexible diplomacy is warranted, combined with careful attention to the long-term implications for China of the inevitable revolution in military affairs. For example, a PLA author approvingly quotes Deng Xiaoping's warning that China can and indeed must make concessions to other nations in the short term in order to achieve its goals by the mid-21st century. This almost inevitable future security environment that China expects provides military leaders the luxury of basing China's main military programs on very long-term criteria. Only minor effort need be paid to near-term force requirements. Unlike the United States, for example, China does not need to prepare its forces in order to participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations like Somalia or Bosnia.

Chinese authors therefore advocate that China must focus on the criteria for the next two or three decades. As General Mi Zhenyu wrote, it does little good for China to try to catch up in 20 years with today's level of Western military technology. A relaxed security environment combined with the dangerous Chinese misperception of a long-term future threat from the United States provide a powerful incentive to China to do exactly what some of its authors advocate: military research, military experiments, military prototypes, but no extended or premature production of any weapons system during a period of "military revolution" of the next two decades. Chinese authors pay a great deal of attention to American and Russian authors about the revolution in military affairs and not a single example has been found that denies its inevitability and significance, even though it is clearly a subject of debate in U.S. military journals.

"DEBATES" ABOUT THE FUTURE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT AND THE RMA

The Chinese assert that the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party itself decides military doctrine and makes the sole authoritative forecast of the future security environment. Indeed, they deny the existence of open "debates" in China. It is impossible for Chinese to believe that the United States attempts to understand subjects as important as the nature of future warfare and the security environment through freewheeling published debates among professional military officers about both future military doctrine and the future security environment. In China, these are serious subjects to be decided by the highest leaders through scientific Marxism without need for "debate." However, this study shows that there appear to have been at least two such strategic debates among the top leaders in Beijing since the early 1980s.

The current strategic debate in the 1990s should be seen in the context of the drastic changes imposed since 1985 on the PLA by Deng Xiaoping. Deng's changes from Mao-style People's War toward a smaller force designed for "local war" have not yet been fully implemented. Yet a new school of military authors seem to be demanding in effect an abandonment of "local war" and a multi decade effort to develop Chinese military forces similar to what American and Russian military authors have called a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA):

- Some authors on future warfare want to go beyond Deng's 1985 programs for modest "local wars."
- They propose future weapons not required in Deng's program for "local war" against neighboring nations.
- They propose weapons designed to deal with U.S. forces.
- They propose that decisions about future weapons acquisition be based on new measures of effectiveness.
- Future weapons effectiveness should be based on ability to defeat super power forces.
- These "RMA" authors occupy important positions.
- The four leading institutions are the main naval research institute, the main air force research institute, the main think tank of the defense industrial complex, the National Defense University and Academy of Military Science.

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- The United States generally lacks access to these institutions, to their most important authors, and even to the most important writings in China about future warfare.

MISPERCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Before turning to China's view of the future, a brief look at the current security environment may help to set the context. China's major foreign policy journals and newspapers publish annual "year end" articles. Since 1991, they have been remarkably positive about the near-term prospects for peace and stability for China and Asia. There appears to be no perception of immediate security threats. Among Western observers of China, most have agreed on this point. Instead, Chinese threat perceptions in the near-term focus on several possibilities: a declaration of independence by Taiwan supported by the United States and Japan; an attack on Chinese installations by and ASEAN states in the South China Sea, where "a second Persian Gulf" of oil, gas and minerals purportedly exists; U.S. subversive efforts "to give financial assistance to hostile forces inside and outside Chinese territories and wait for the opportune moment to stir up turbulence;" the purported gradual rise of Japanese militarism which "has certainly never stopped its maritime patrols" of islands China also claims and which by 2020 will purportedly have a defense budget 25 times the size of China's; potential pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic subversion in China's far western Xinjiang, where a single rail line links to the rest of China; and the "anti-splittism struggle" in Tibet where the sole strategic road which supplies Tibet is still claimed by India.

6 NEAR-TERM THREATS:

1. Taiwan Independence
2. South China Sea war
3. U.S. Subversion
4. Tibet Independence
5. Islamic Separatism
6. A Second Korean War

INCREASING U.S. MILITARY WEAKNESS

How does China see the future military balance? How do Chinese leaders structure the framework for assessing military balances? What scenarios do they consider in predicting the outcomes of possible future wars? What kinds of indicators and measures of effectiveness do Chinese analysts use to assess the military balance? We can make inferences to try to answer these questions from a number of Chinese military books and articles.

In general,³ most Chinese analysts since 1991 have acknowledged the United States as the "sole military superpower" and that the United States has the most technologically advanced army, navy and air force in the world. However, this characterization of narrow technological superiority would mean very little in a U.S. conflict with China. Chinese authors repeatedly emphasize that major, fatal weaknesses characterize the American Armed Forces. Somewhat humorously, one analyst wrote, "In the last 20 years, people have turned pale at the mere mention of U.S. military strength." However, almost universally cite Chairman Mao's requirement that the dialectical aspect of Chinese military science requires assessment of weakness as well as strength. First of all, we examine the Chinese misperception that the United States suffers from fundamental logistics weaknesses. Then we turn to a perhaps more dangerous Chinese perception of U.S. operational weaknesses that Chinese authors believe Saddam Hussein could have exploited in order to defeat the United States if he had used Chinese-style strategy. In order to denigrate the image of the United States as a superpower colossus, a number of Chinese articles focus on American logistics limitations.

The United States is described as a country which "must cross the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans and go to Europe or Asia" before any serious war starts. In the history of the American strategy, from 1961 to 1968, Presidents Kennedy and Johnson incorporated a flexible response strategy for fighting two and a half wars simultaneously. Chinese military authors refer to these as a war with the Soviet Union and

³Wu Chi, special article, "Gulf War Reveals U.S. Weak Points," *Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao*, March 20, 1991, in FBIS, March 26, 1991. Quotations in the text are from this article.

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Europe, a war with China and Asia, and half a war with a regional power in a region such as the Middle East. As America's overall national strength declined, however, from 1969 to 1980, Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter realized that "strength fell short of ambition" to fight two and a half wars, so U.S. military strategy shifted to fighting one and a half wars. Chinese called this "fighting the big war either in Europe or Asia, and at the same time a small war in some other region."

The Chinese posit that American weakness can be seen from the U.S. definition that the Gulf War should have been a "half war," but in fact required

almost all of America's conventional weapons, that its reserves to be called up, that 6 months were needed for the U.S. to complete the deployment of troops in the Gulf, and that it had to hire foreign ships to carry troops, equipment and supplies. Chinese analysts point out that nearly 50 percent of the weapons and equipment for the Gulf War had to be carried by foreign ships and foreign aircraft because the United States lacked the strategic airlift and sealift itself. More importantly, Chinese articles point out that oil which accounts for 50 percent of the materials consumed by the U.S. Armed Forces could basically be arranged in the region rather than having to rely on vulnerable lines of supply. "If it were a long, drawn out war, with many casualties and losses, could the United States promptly replenish troops, equipment, and materials and maintain the troops' fighting ability?"

They cite other U.S. advantages in the Gulf War, not to be repeated again, as the cooperation of 28 countries in the coalition and the role

U.S. MILITARY WEAKNESS

- United States Defeated in Vietnam and Korea
- U.S. Contribution to Victory in World War II less than Russia and China
- U.S. Declining Comprehensive Power
- "2 and a half war" strategy of 1960s reduced to "1 and a half war" strategy in 1970s
- In 1990s, only "two half wars" strategy
- United States Won Gulf War only because of to special factors unlikely to be repeated
- United States has only 30 percent chance to win a war in Asia

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of 120 countries in imposing a blockade against Iraq. In spite of all these advantages, Chinese analysts point out that it took Iraq only several hours to capture Kuwait, but the allied forces took more than 30 days to recover Kuwait.

One important assessment concludes that if it was so difficult for the United States to win a "half war" against Iraq with so many advantages from its coalition forces, the United States would not do well fighting alone against China and Asia. A PLA author asserts that a United States war with China and Asia would be "hard to predict the result:"

If we have to predict, then the chance of its winning is only 30 percent, because the U.S. Forces have never fought a "whole" war overseas, while the "half wars" they have fought ended sometimes with victory and sometimes with defeat. The two sides fought to a draw in the Korean War; Vietnam War was lost; and the Gulf War was a victory, but fought by 28 countries.

Even looking back on World War II, Chinese assessment is that although the United States was in a "whole" war, it fought only "half of it" because of its limited participation, which began with Pearl Harbor. According to the Chinese assessment, "The relentless pressure of the Russians was driving the Germans farther and farther back, and the defeat of Germany was almost a certainty" before the United States opened the second front in Normandy. Even in the European theater, the United States was joined by both the Soviet Union and Britain, while in the Asian theater the United States enjoyed the combat cooperation of "China, Britain, and the Soviet Union."⁴

NINE AMERICAN MILITARY WEAKNESSES

As stated, the Chinese perception of American strategic weakness due to logistics is bad enough. However, this misperception is compounded by the assertions of many Chinese military authors that at least nine American operational weaknesses could one day make U.S. forces extremely vulnerable to a Chinese-style strategy.

⁴These quotations are all from the article, "Gulf War Reveals U.S. Weak Points," March 20, 1991.

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First, after stating, "Nothing can better reflect an Army's fighting ability than combat involving attacks on fortified positions," one Chinese analyst proceeds to assess this American weakness in terms that may be of direct interest to China's military leadership if press reports are accurate that China has a series of underground tunnels in the mountainous area to the west of Beijing that contains a national command center. Chinese concern with tunneling and the use of mountainous areas for command centers and protection of Army, Navy and Air Force equipment dates back to the Korean War and is often described with pride in Chinese historical accounts. Therefore, it is likely that Chinese military leaders take comfort in the following American operational weakness.

The Chinese explain American success in attacking Iraqi fortifications as due to the terrain in Kuwait and Southern Iraq, which is "a flat desert" where it is "difficult to build long-term solid fortifications" because the sand layer is so thin. Even with this advantage of Iraqi weakness, "the U.S. took a long time to tackle them . . . in 38 days they flew 10,000 sorties, and eliminated only 40 percent of the Iraqi forces." To the Chinese, the important point about American weakness is that U.S. forces could not overcome the following defenses: cities and mountains deep in the hinterland, the underground command post, garrisoned tunnels, underground warehouses, aircraft bunkers and strategic missile bunkers that, according to the Chinese analysis, were "relatively safe." Only a few civilian bunkers and "some hangers which were not solid enough" were destroyed. U.S. conventional munitions cannot destroy fortifications with walls greater than 10 meters thick or deep underground facilities, especially in mountainous areas.

CHINA CAN DEFEAT U.S. FORCES

- Don't Repeat Saddam's mistakes
- He permitted U.S. logistics buildup
- He gave United States space sanctuary for satellites
- He permitted U.S. training for 6 months
- Iraqi economy was "irrational"—Iraq imported 80 percent of food, 60 percent medicines, most modern weapons
- He did not harass behind U.S. lines
- He lacked a nuclear deterrent

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The Chinese analyst concludes, "If the Iraqi forces could have relied on mountainous areas and built tunnels with layers more than 10 meters or even dozens of meters thick, then even if the U.S. forces could have cut several meters away from the peak, they could have not hurt the Iraqi forces one little bit." Using this measure of effectiveness, Chinese analysts can belittle American capabilities to "penetrate or blow up a protective layer several meters thick" or the battleship Wisconsin's 1-ton shells that can destroy "a reinforced concrete protective layer as thick as 4 meters."

Second, a series of Chinese articles criticized the Iraqi military commanders for not exploiting well-known American weaknesses.⁵ The Vietcong and North Vietnamese knew how to play on American weaknesses, but the Iraqis did not learn lessons from the Vietnamese. For example, the Iraqis did not conduct harassment attacks behind American lines at bases in Saudi Arabia, unlike the Vietcong extensive operations in this regard. The Iraqi officer corps was not sufficiently trained in technology to really master the advanced equipment that it had purchased.⁶

One way to defeat U.S. Air Force and Naval air power is to strike at American-controlled airbases, according to former Chief of Staff of the PLA, General Su Yu, "However strong a combat capability, an Army unit does not have any combat capability before entering its position." According to past examples of "local wars" the Israeli Air Force succeeded in launching surprise attacks in several wars because of its "strict training and meticulous planning and preparations" and because "the other party slackened their efforts, lowered their guard, had insufficient training and issued inappropriate combat commands."

Third, according to the Chinese, the Iraqis allowed the U.S. Armed Forces to conduct special training for several months before the war and to remain on a high state of alert. "This undoubtedly helped to win superiority and take the initiative." According the Chinese analysts, "Air power's relative strength is complicated. It includes the quality and quantity of weapons, the training level and fighting will of

⁵ "The Chinese Military is Worried About Lagging Behind in Armament," *Hong Kong Tang Tai*, March 9, 1991, in FBIS, March 14, 1991.

⁶ Song Xingshi and Su Qingyi, "Reassessing Constraints on Air Power," *Liberation Army Daily*, January 25, 1991, in FBIS, February 12, 1991.

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personnel, the logistics support capabilities, and combat operational concepts." These are referred to as "a balance of static forces" which Chinese analysts do not believe is as useful a measure of effectiveness as the "balance of dynamic forces." The dynamic balance "has a great deal to do with how both parties actually employ their power."

Fourth, a particular example of how one side in combat can greatly strengthen its superiority in a "balance of dynamic strength" is to adopt "special measures." In the Gulf War, although the U.S.-led coalition had static balance superiority in terms of air power, if the Iraqis had followed a North Vietnamese example, they could have released "smoke screens supplemented by the spray of water" which the Vietnamese used to "make it impossible for the laser-guided bombs dropped by the U.S. Air Force to hit the Hanoi electric power station." Some Iraqi special measures were effective, however. Quoting a U.S. Government source, Chinese analysts state, "Only a dozen or so of the seven hundred Iraqi aircraft were destroyed in the first two days of air raids," because of the effectiveness of air defense self protective measures, camouflage, "air defense exercises in cities." In the long run, Chinese analysts trust the use of protracted and guerilla warfare to wear down the invader. Harassing attacks can create confusion and cause losses and damage the morale of the political system.

Fifth, a series of Chinese articles describes how each individual U.S. high tech weapons system has its own particular weaknesses and flaws which must be studied and attacked. Even the U.S. tomahawk cruise missile could be shot down by Chinese surface-to-air guided missiles. Chinese missiles have "on several occasions downed U.S.- made U2 High-Altitude Reconnaissance planes,

US MILITARY IMPOTENCE AGAINST IRAQ--IMPLICATIONS FOR CHINA

- United States cannot destroy deep underground command centers, tunnels, bunkers
- United States required 28 other nations to assist
- U.S. strategic lift limits: 50 percent by foreigners
- U.S. Tomahawk: one was shot down.
- U.S. F-117: one was detected by ship radar.
- Three M-1 tanks equal one T-72 in defilade.

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causing a great shock to the United States."⁷ The HQ-2 Surface-to-Air Guided Missile made by China is acclaimed to have a "killing probability" of "no less than 90 percent" when three missiles are launched simultaneously within the effective range of about 30 kilometers.

Sixth, another measure of effectiveness showing American military weakness involves Iraqi tanks and American efforts to destroy them.⁸ According to Zhai Zhigang, a military research fellow, U.S. troops, in order to successfully attack Iraqi troops, will have to achieve a three-to-one superiority in order to "insure a quick battle to force a quick decision." But Zhai lists the obstacles to American success. First, Iraqis had built antitank ditches filled with gasoline and with mines laid densely around them. Thus, "even if the 2,200 U.S. tanks break through the many Iraqi tank positions and gallop to northern Kuwait, they will fight an engagement with nearly 1,000 T-72 tanks from five of the best Presidential Republican Guard divisions. According to Zhai, "A tank in a defilade can usually cope with two to three offensive tanks with similar capabilities." There were 4,000 Iraqi tanks in Kuwait which have been concealed in "solid defilades." Therefore, Zhai estimated that only 40 percent of a tank in a defilade is exposed and camouflaging it makes it hard to discover or hit directly.

What is the significance of these peculiar military calculations that Zhai Zhigang is making? In the first place, his comments confirm the use of operations research by Chinese analysts. Trading off one tank vs. two to three tanks when the defending tank is in defilade is a good example. The suggestion that the 2,200 U.S. tanks that penetrate Northern Kuwait would not be able to successfully destroy one thousand T-72 tanks contains a number of peculiar misperceptions. A US-crewed M-1 tank is wrongly considered roughly equivalent to an Iraqi-crewed, 20-year-old, Soviet-made T-72 tank. The impression is given that even a 2.2-to-1 superiority is inadequate.

⁷Exclusive Report: "China-made Weapons Display Their Might in the Middle East," *Hong Kong Tang Tai*, January 26, 1991, in FBIS, February 5, 1991.

⁸Zhang Changqing, "Chinese Military Research Fellows on the Gulf War," *Liaoyang Overseas Edition*, January 28, 1991, in FBIS, February 1, 1991.

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Seventh, a Chinese military research fellow, Han Ren, pointed out that Iraq had an important economic-based weakness. "Iraq's economic structure is irrational and 80 percent of food, 60 percent of medicines, and the majority of modern weapons are imported." Han described Iraq's overall military disadvantage by comparing the static totals. His comparisons are particularly interesting because Iraq's quantitative military indicators approach those of China. Han says that Iraq has 1.1 million troops, 5,500 tanks, 780 combat planes, and 40 to 50 naval vessels. The U.S. and Coalition Forces count 700,000 troops, 2,200 planes, 3,100 tanks, and some 200 naval vessels that are in both quality and capability superior to Iraq. Chinese analyst Fu Chengli, a research fellow at the Academy of Military Science, predicted in advance that "it was impossible to fight a quick battle to force a quick decision." According to Fu, "Saddam's military tactic is one of gaining mastery by striking only after his enemy has struck . . . he can only attack a counter attack at an appropriate time." Part of Saddam's strategy is to delay the war until after March and the Islamic fasting, "when the Moslem world will embarrass the United States." Fu added that the Saddam would like to delay the war until June when the pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia would further deter the United States: "It will be hot and it will be more unfavorable to the United States." He predicted that "it seems that a trial of strengths will go on for a comparatively long time." Like other Chinese analysts, Fu could not imagine a quick U.S. victory.

Eighth, the Chinese media (and interviews this author had in Beijing) stress that Iraq did not have a nuclear deterrent and that the United States needed to make nuclear threats in order to achieve victory over Iraq. According to the Chinese, Saddam treated seriously a comment to the British Broadcasting Corporation by Vice President Dan Quayle, on February 1, 1991, that he "would not rule out using nuclear weapons in the war against Iraq." This assertion seems to suggest that the conventional forces alone of the U.S.-led coalition could not have defeated Iraq without a nuclear threat which presumably would not be so successful in deterring China.

Ninth, Chinese assessments of American air power also include specific measures of effectiveness and imply the use of operations research. The U.S. AWACS early warning aircraft has "raised by more than 30 percent the probability of attacking aircraft hitting their

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targets." This would be effective even for old aircraft models. Chinese assessments of the Falklands War emphasized that "even though Argentina did not enjoy advanced air power, it achieved the glorious distinction of downing eighteen British ships and won widespread notice in the international community."⁹ He points out that "even in the Gulf War, in which the largest amount of new weaponry was used, aircraft dating from the 1960s made up the biggest proportion of the total used by Coalition Forces." The point seems to be that by combining new and a majority of old fighter aircraft with the force multiplier of AWACS and others listed in the article (electronic jamming aircraft sometimes made up as much as 25 percent of each formation), superiority can be achieved. This peculiar misperception seems to mean that obsolete 30-year-old fighter aircraft (the majority of China's air force) can be made effective by adding a few AWACS aircraft and electronic jamming aircraft, which China is in the process of acquiring. This is not a proper approach to assessing the balance of air power and could lead to a major miscalculation. If Chinese military leaders actually use such concepts, they would greatly underestimate the damage that advanced fighter aircraft can do to a nation defended by obsolete fighters.

These examples are intended to illustrate how Chinese military authors consistently denigrate U.S. military power in a manner that will create a variety of Chinese miscalculations. It would be possible to spell out in more detail just how these beliefs in U.S. operational weaknesses could make it difficult if not impossible for China's leaders to calculate accurately the results of engagements with U.S. forces or with US-trained and equipped forces such as those of Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. The consequences of China's consistently underestimating the military power of potential opponents greatly complicates any effort to deter China by assuming that China can accurately determine the consequences of conflicts in which the power of Beijing's military forces are overestimated. The resulting dangerous Chinese misperceptions of current and near-term military balances are not nearly as unrealistic as Chinese calculations about the future. China's

⁹Sun Hongwei, "New Developments in Use of Air Power," *Liberation Army Daily*, March 22, 1991, in FBIS, April 15, 1991.

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truly dangerous misperceptions concern the future even more than the present.

FUTURE TRENDS TO 2030

China's current assessment of the future security environment began even before the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War; it is characterized as a "new era" that will last several decades and be characterized by "local wars" as a "redivision of spheres of influence" takes place. The outcome of this transitional period of "turbulence" will have these features:

- After the transition period is complete, there will no longer be any "superpowers" but instead a "multipolar world" in which five major nations will each have roughly equal "comprehensive national power."

- The nations that will do "best" in competitive terms during the transitional period will pursue "peace and development" which means they will have low defense expenditures and avoid the damage of warfare. Chinese authors frequently assert that the collapse of the USSR and

the decline of the USA have been due in large part to extremely high defense spending.

- Today's "sole superpower" is in severe decline and risks declining so rapidly that it may not even be one of the five multipolar powers but may fall to the level of a mere "regional power." This continual decline of the United States in the decades ahead is an important feature of the Chinese assessment, so this study provides more details on this subject than on China's views of other major powers.

- After the transition to the multipolar world, a new "World System" will emerge that will probably resemble the current Chinese proposal for "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" to

TRENDS FROM 2010 TO 2030

- A turbulent transition.
- US decline continues.
- Japan, Russia and Europe re-divide U.S. sphere.
- China's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.
- The US, Europe, Japan, Russia become socialist.

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govern international affairs. The Chinese authorities assert that world politics since the 1800s always has had a "system" or a "strategic pattern." Under those rules, there is a competition among powers that includes a global division of spheres of influence. Chinese historical textbooks discuss the prior "Vienna System" of 1815-1870, then an intermediate system when Germany and Italy each unified and Japan launched the Meiji Reform, followed by the "Versailles System" of 1920-1945 and the "Yalta System" of 1945-1989.

- The new Chinese-style system of the Five Principles will be much better, they assert, because there will be harmony, no "power politics" and "hegemony," and the multipolar major powers will focus more on "peace and development" than struggles for influence. This harmonious world requires a transition away from capitalism in the major powers toward some type of "socialist market economy." Just as China has modified the doctrines of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin to produce what Deng Xiaoping called "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," so will the United States, Germany, Japan, and Russia ultimately develop their own socialistic characteristics.
- Some Chinese military authors believe that there is now underway a "Revolution in Military Affairs" which will radically change the nature of future warfare. Nevertheless, several decades will be needed to determine the shape of future warfare and to develop the weapons, organizational forms and operation concepts. In the event that the Capitalist nations do not transition peacefully to socialism or otherwise "go quietly" during the transition period to the new era, then China will have to be ready to defend itself, in spite of its professed desire to maintain low defense spending in order to maximize "peace and development."
- A major global war involving China is highly unlikely for two decades. This is a sharp change from the forecasts of Chairman Mao (and Stalin) that a global war was inevitable. Therefore, China claims to have cut its defense spending from more than 6 percent of GNP in the 1960s and 1970s, to between 2 and 3 percent when the current assessment came into force by the mid-1980s, and down to about 1.5 percent of the GNP in the 1990s. This claim by China that it has drastically reduced defense

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spending,, which included cutting the PLA from 7 to 3 million, may have to be reversed if "local wars" become extensive during the turbulent transition ahead.

- There are global forces at work for disintegration and violence along with the forces for "peace and development."

PERCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

THE VIEW FROM SHANGHAI AND ITS IMPORTANCE

These features of the future security environment can be found in many books and articles of the 1990s, but it is particularly important to focus on the views of the Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS) because of its close relationship with China's current president, Jiang Zemin.

FUTURE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

1. U.S. superpower status ends
2. A five power "multipolar world"
3. Struggles to re-divide spheres of influence.

An authoritative article that well illustrates Chinese perceptions was published in 1995 in *Qiu Shi*, the journal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Like most of the articles used for this report, it was not translated into English by the U.S. government translation service because this issue is not yet considered as important as the other subjects which make up the nearly 100 pages per day from the Chinese press translated for U.S. Government use.

In "The Roots of the Transitional Era," which focuses on turbulence and wars, SIIS Director Chen Qimao states,

Historically speaking, disintegration of an empire would experience a long and painful process. The Eastern Roman Empire began to decline at the end of the twelfth century and was destroyed by the Ottoman Empire in 1461. The whole process took as long as more than two hundred years, during which class conflicts were intensifying, (and) . . . invasions from the outside constantly took place.

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Chen then compares the decline of the Ottoman Empire to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Chen points out that the full process of the decline of the former U.S.S.R. is not yet completed. He notes that there are still 25 million Russians living in other republics outside of Russia, and 20 million of other nationalities in Russia. He forecasts, "Due to the rise of nationalism, this situation may lead to a great deal of explosive potential." The process of reform and the completion of the process of disintegration of the former Soviet Union, Chen argues, will "become one of the important causes of turbulence in the transitional era." He reminds us that the former Soviet Union was a superpower and in World War II it "utterly routed the imperial fascist Germany."

Chen then draws on several episodes of Chinese history to illustrate how the process of the emergence of a new era can take many decades. He begins with the decline of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25 BC-220 AD) to the establishment of the Western Jin Dynasty (265-316 AD), a period of about 80 years during which the "war lords fought each other, the Three Kingdoms dominated their own territories, while the masses lived in dire poverty." China saw another long period of turbulence when the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) collapsed, he adds.

Looking to the several decades that lie ahead for the emergence of a post-Cold War world strategic pattern, Chen points to Central Eurasia as a conflict zone where "religious frictions and national disputes are interlocking leading to a lot of historic grievances." This is also where two world wars were fought. This whole zone in the past century or more has been dominated by Tsarist Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and the Austro-Hungarian Empires. According to Chen, the contradictions among these three empires produced several wars. He states, "Territorial issues were always so sensitive that a little disturbance could have resulted in enormous turbulence, thus leading to the danger of another world war." Chen adheres to the concept put forth by many Chinese analysts that the Vienna System, built upon the Anti-Napoleon War, the Versailles System established after World War I, and the Yalta System built upon World War II, could create new political maps and divide spheres of influence among the great powers relatively rapidly, because of the International Conference agreements that these great powers were able to work out after the wars.

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Without such a war or international conference to mark the end of the Cold War, Chen states that a new world system cannot be created by way of victorious powers conferences, "nor can spheres of influence be divided quickly." Thus, Chen believes violence is ahead, and "redivision of spheres of influence will be a long-term and tortuous process. . . the struggle among big powers for spheres of influence is under way." Russia wants to maintain as its sphere all of its former Soviet boundaries, while "there is little doubt that Western nations want to have East

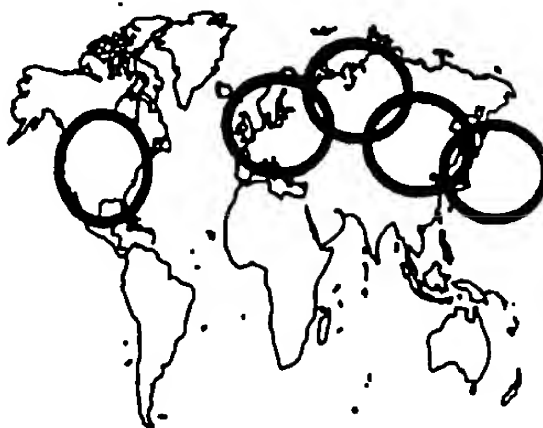
European countries joining NATO and to put them under the protection of the West." Besides

the struggle for redividing spheres of influence in Europe, Chen states that "struggles between the United States and Japan for the dominating role in the Asia Pacific as well as struggles among Germany,

France and Britain for the dominating role in Europe have not yet surfaced, but they do demonstrate themselves through a series of signs." Such struggles involve re-division of influence spheres and "will become significant roots for the emergence of turbulence in the transitional world."

In Europe, Chen agrees with many Chinese analysts that Germany was the great winner of the Cold War and has the best prospects to become a great power in the new era. He traces the origins of the Bosnia Conflict to "Germany's support for independence of Slovenia and Croatia without taking into account American objections and other European allies' reservations. Germany also went together with Austria to supply a great deal of weapons to Slovenia and Croatia, quickening

END OF US SUPERPOWER: FIVE EQUALS



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the pace of disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and worsening the turbulence in the Balkan Peninsula." But Chen goes on to use the Bosnia case study as an "indirect demonstration of the struggle between the United States and the European union" over who will dominate the future of Europe.

Chen, like many Chinese analysts, directly attacks the concept that the United States is the sole superpower and that there is a unipolar strategic pattern. Will there be American hegemony? According to Chen, "Enormous facts emerging after the end of the Cold War have proved that kind of view wrong." He believes that many issues "demonstrate that the American ability to control its allies has decreased." However, "the Yalta System in the Asia-Pacific region was not so complete and solid as that in Europe." Chen argues that a looser, multipolar system has long existed in Asia because of the American failure in the Vietnam War, and the Soviet failure in the Afghan War, which reduced the two superpowers' influence. He states, "Their capacity to control the region was already much less than that in Europe. Due to these developments, many contradictions, and disputes in the Asia-Pacific region were not covered by the bipolar system." Of course, he acknowledges that the Asia-Pacific region has a number of uncertainties such as territorial disputes, the Korean problem, the Taiwan issue, and the leadership succession in several countries. However, the Asia-Pacific region has actually become one in which "the centers not only are relatively independent but also in mutual check and balance" among the United States, Russia, Japan, China, and ASEAN.

Using the indicators of "comprehensive national power" (described at greater length in the pages that follow), Chen believes that "the heyday when the United States dominated the Asia-Pacific region has gone forever." Thus, the multipolar structure has begun to take shape earlier in Asia-Pacific than in other regions of the world, so that it's possible already to say that "no single power can have the final say in the Asia-Pacific region." This has been achieved without a Yalta Conference, a Versailles Conference, or a Vienna Conference. The role of China has become a source of regional stability due to its rapid economic growth and its adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Chen believes China's role has been important in

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encouraging this transition to take shape in Asia first.¹⁰ This argument is strengthened by another article in the same issue of the Journal by former SIIS President Liang Yufan, who states that because China was the "prey of imperialist aggression for more than a century, the rivalry of great powers inside China was once a major cause of persistent instability and turmoil and wars in East Asia." The implication is that a strong, unified China eliminates the influence of foreign great powers (who caused wars), so Chinese unity and stability will help to bring the new era to East Asia first.¹¹

WORLD STRATEGIC PATTERNS

Several authoritative Chinese articles and books have described important premises about the future security environment. The first concept is this notion of an era or "strategic pattern." This term is used to characterize periods of several decades. Each "world strategic pattern" is based on a structural state of relations among the major "forces" in the world. The process by which one world strategic pattern gives away to another is usually a major war. The basic Chinese catechism characterizes four major "world strategic patterns" during the past 200 years.

The first world pattern, called the "Vienna System Pattern" by the Chinese, lasted for 40 to 50 years and was set up by the victorious nations who defeated Napoleon. These four powers (Russia, Austria, Prussia and Britain) established a strategic pattern that was centered entirely on Europe and characterized by mutual bargaining and the use of "spheres of influence" to preserve stability.

The second pattern also lasted for 40 to 50 years. It was created by internal events in Japan, Italy, Germany and the United States that "broke the original proportions and distributions of strength" and in so doing broke out of the strategic pattern confined only to Europe. This strategic pattern was still centered on Europe but expanded to North America and Asia. Briefly, the major developments were the

¹⁰Chen Qimao, "The Transitional Era: Roots of Turbulence and Features of International Affairs," *Journal of the Shanghai Institute for International Studies* Vol. 1, No. 2 (1994): 15 - 32.

¹¹Liang Yufan, "The Rise of Asia and Asian Regional Security," *Journal of the Shanghai Institute for International Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1994): 13.

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rapid development of capitalism in the United States after the Civil War, the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the political unification of Italy, and the unification of Germany in 1870 and its defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871.

The third "world strategic pattern" derived from the conduct of the powers who won World War I. In a manner similar to the establishment of the Vienna System Pattern, the Versailles System was established by the strong victorious powers (United States, Britain, France, Italy and Japan). As had occurred with the Vienna Conference after the Napoleonic Wars, the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 "redivided the world" and laid down the rules for this next "era." Although the October Revolution established the Soviet Union in this period, Moscow participated in the Versailles System.

The fourth "world strategic pattern" is known in China as the Yalta System. The name derives from the Yalta Summit between the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union in February 1945 at the end of World War II. Chinese claim this conference "carved out the spheres of influence in Europe and Asia for the United States and the Soviet Union." With respect to China, the Yalta Summit included Soviet recognition of "U.S. control over Japan" while the United States in turn satisfied the Soviet Union's wishes to regain Sakhalin Island, enabled outer Mongolia to become independent, and "enlisted Northeast China into the sphere of influence." The Chinese state that the decline of British strength reduced its sphere of influence, so that the Yalta System actually established a strategic world pattern of two poles, Washington and Moscow, whose relationship largely determined world politics.

The Yalta System endured until 1991, nearly 50 years. Chinese date the end of the Yalta System to 1991 because of the reunification of Germany. The core of the Yalta Agreement was the division of Europe and Germany into two parts. Although the Chinese say the Yalta System has "basically disintegrated," they recognize it continues in Northeast Asia in the division between North Korea and South Korea and in the unresolved territorial dispute between Moscow and Tokyo over the "Northern territories." There have been some Chinese references to the unresolved problem of Taiwan's sovereignty also being a part of the Yalta System because Taiwan's legal status was not resolved either at Yalta or the San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951.

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Chinese articles and books describe the new era as one of transition in which the new world strategic pattern is in the process of replacing an old one. Ten years ago, Deng Xiaoping apparently described four alternative scenarios, in still unreleased documents, each of which was based on a different “

FOUR SOURCES OF FUTURE WAR

- East-West Conflicts
- North-South Conflicts
- South-South Conflicts
- West-West Conflicts

basic contradiction” that would characterize the new era. He summarized a series of major conflicts in the world that might lead to war in four Chinese characters: “East, West, South, and North.” The first set of conflicts (East-West) is posited as the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union—that is, between socialism and capitalism; West-West conflicts are characterized as between developed capitalist countries; South-North conflicts are between the developing Third World countries and the developed capitalist countries; and South-South conflicts are the differences between Third World countries which can also lead to warfare. A crucial part of this formulation of the sources of future warfare is that China will never be a source of war, nor does China aspire to become a superpower even though Chinese officials since 1988 explicitly accepted the Ikle-Wohlstetter Commission estimate that China will have the world largest economy around 2020.

MISMEASURING COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL STRENGTH

In the early 1980s, Deng and his political associates introduced the notion of competition for comprehensive national power (rather than military strength alone) as the main characteristic of the new era of transition after the Yalta System. Nations will pursue their “national interests” particularly in seeking to increase their economic growth rates through exploiting science and technology and trade. There seems to have been extensive debate about how to define and measure the components of “comprehensive national strength” after Deng introduced the term early in the 1980s. The debate may not be resolved. A PLA-affiliated journal in 1996 published the first table of indicators ranking the comprehensive national strength of about fifty nations and pledged to publish this competitive ranking according to

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"comprehensive national power" every year in the future. This entire field is referred to as peaceful competition for "peace and development" as nations attempt to improve their rank order according to "comprehensive national strength" based on economics and technologies.

This is not the only kind of international strategic competition, however. The other part of the new era is the inevitable "local wars" and destabilizing factors that will last for several decades as part of the current transition era. The future "world strategic pattern" will depend on the outcomes of both kinds of competitions. The struggle for "peace and development" will shift the competitive rank orders of various nations according to their "comprehensive national strength," according to the economic and technology policies they pursue. At the same time, in the military domain, there are different rules to the international competition, including the use of force and the competition for military superiority. This field has been addressed largely by military authors in China, although a few civilian analysts have also written about the consequences of "local war" and the development of military technology.

In contrast to Western nations, there appear to be no Chinese articles or books on the international security situation which express optimism about the future role of arms control or the United Nations in building international trust or reducing the probability of the use of force. Since 1980, China has entered global economic institutions like the World Bank and IMF, but has never accepted the jurisdiction of international security arrangements such as UN peacekeeping forces. Many Chinese articles mention the current trend of "relaxation," then warn that there are prospects for more wars in the future. The certainty of future local wars does not seem to be the subject of debate. On the contrary, all Chinese analysts expect frequent local wars in the decades ahead. In the available literature, the definition of "local war" includes the conflicts in Korea in 1950-53, Vietnam 1964-69, and the Gulf War of 1991. This is an important premise of Chinese views of the future security environment: international wars on at least the scale of Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf War are virtually certain in the decades ahead. Furthermore, there are many explicit references to the level of destruction caused by each of these past local wars. Different measures of destructiveness have been used. Logistics is one. Korea used 600,000

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bombs in three years of war. Vietnam required twice that number of bombs. The Gulf war consumed nearly 8 million tons of supplies. Chinese articles on the "revolution in science and technology" expect future wars to have still higher levels of destruction.

An interesting aspect of the Chinese assessment of the role of military competition in the current transition era is that other major nations are presumed to share the same assessment as China holds. An article by two PLA analysts in January, 1991¹² claimed that the United States thinks "a new threat surpassing the confrontation between the East and the West in the past forty-five years" is emerging. Similarly, Chinese military analysts argue, "The Soviet military thinks that the process of easing up does not have an irreversible nature and that the danger of war still exists in the world." Even Japan is claimed to believe that "in this century, Japan's security situation will not be basically improved, and that it still faces a military threat and serious competitors. Therefore, Japan will continue to beef up military strength and improve weapons and equipment." With respect to India, the PLA analysts claim that India thinks "India's security situation in the 1990s is still very grim, therefore it will continue to improve overall military strength and strategic deterrence strength." Therefore, during the transition era the PLA analysts conclude that various countries "view the use of military strength as an important means to support their international status and safeguard their national interests."

MISASSESSING WORLD POWER

Chinese journal published by the PLA-affiliated Society for Strategy and Management has sponsored a number of debates on the future of world politics and economics which focus on the competition among major powers, including how to measure differences in future national power. As part of a continuing interest in how nations will compete in the future, the journal annually publishes how China compares in global competitiveness. Chinese authors seem obsessed with identifying which nations will be winners and which will be losers. Translations are made of Western books which discuss the rise or decline of nations. On rare occasions, Chinese authors reveal the indicators currently in use.

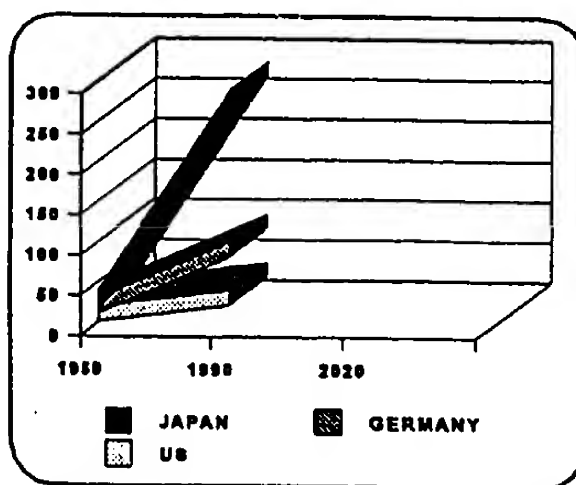
¹²*Liberation Army Daily*, January 4, 1991, 3, in FBIS, January 31, 1991.

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Apparently, the United States is falling further and further behind according to the most important indicators.

As the book *How to Lie with Statistics* showed, one's selection of indicators of national power will be decisive in creating the results. Indicators are consistently selected to put the U.S. national strength in the worst light. According to Jin Dexiang, a senior analyst in CICIR, "Washington today does not merely run the risk of weakening its national power, it is actually bogged down in the quagmire of relative decline." Jin notes that the average annual growth rate of U.S. productivity was "a mere 1.2 percent in the 1970s, lagging behind all the other Western developed countries, barely one-third that of Japan and one-half that of Germany." He adds that the U.S. share in world trade has "nosedived" from 25 percent in the immediate postwar years to a mere 10.8 percent in 1987 even as the share for Japan and Germany has more than doubled. Other signposts he uses are that in 1971, "Washington lost its trade surplus status it had kept for more than 80 years," while Japan and Germany are running trade surpluses. He compares Japanese and German policies toward education of the labor force and the general public, which are so much better than the U.S. approach to the point that the speaker of the Japanese Diet said the problems of the U.S.

products are due to the fact that 30 percent of American workers are illiterate. Worse still, he says the United States has "degenerated into the largest debtor in the world in 1995" while Japan and Germany have invested overseas assets to over one trillion in the case of Japan. The main explanation Jin advances for American decline (and the rise of Japan and Germany), however, is the percentage of defense

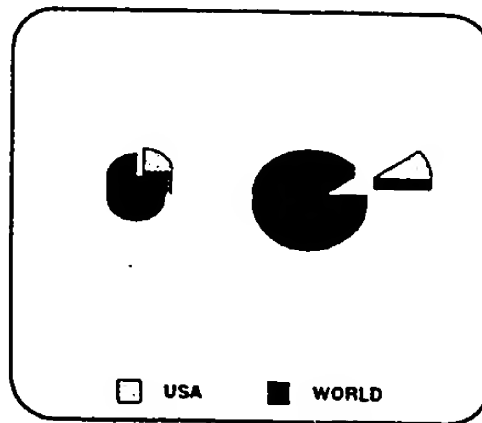


COMPARATIVE RATE OF GNP
GROWTH 1950-1990—
"WINNERS AND LOSERS"

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spending in their national budgets. While U.S. military spending was "skyrocketing in 1951 to 9.8 percent of its GNP and in 1967 the Vietnam War again boosted the figures to 9.1 percent with the figures for the remaining years exceeding 6 percent on average" Japan was maintaining its military expenditures seldom above 1 percent of GNP and Germany was averaging between 3 and 4 percent of GNP. The main point Jin makes is, "It is precisely this crucial difference that explains the by far higher growth rates of the two over that of the United States." He points out that in 1980-valued dollars the American GNP has grown from 1950 to 1990 by a factor of three while Japan's GNP has increased 19 times and Germany's more than six times, because the average growth rate for America was about 3 percent while for Tokyo it was 7.7 percent and Germany 4.3 percent. He concludes, "The growth rates for the three are in inverse proportion to their military spending." This widespread Chinese view seems have had an important impact on the continuing limitations on Chinese defense spending—it is a economic growth measure, not a reflection of a change in the security environment that requires lower spending on military force.

What are the long-term consequences of the United States declining while others rise? First, these trends will continue for a long time. Jin concludes that "Changes in the relative economic status of the United States, Japan, and Germany have exerted a far-reaching impact not only on their external and internal policies but also on world economics, world politics and international relations." Therefore, "Bulging money bags have whetted the appetite of both Tokyo and Bonn for a larger global role in the political arena." The former Japanese Prime Minister wrote to President George Bush, "A new world order should be built under a tripolar U.S.-European-Japanese leadership." Japan is "beefing



DECLINE SINCE 1950 OF US
SHARE OF WORLD TRADE

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up its military muscle" and "filling up the vacuum left behind by U.S.-Soviet military retrenchment" in the Asia-Pacific region. Germany, too, seeks a major political role with several tactics. It is striving for a Bonn-centered European Economic Zone while "trying its best to overtake Japan and catch up with the United States in the Twenty-first Century." Germany, together with France, demands an independent West European defense force, Jin writes, which is being "frustrated by strong U.S. opposition at present, but will definitely be abandoned."

Jin introduces a new factor on the horizon that will bring "increasingly fierce rivalry." He forecasts that this rivalry will intensify as a result of slow growth in world trade in the 1990s that will drop from an annual growth of about 20 percent in the 1970s to around 5 percent that it saw in the 1980s. Drawing upon Marxist-Leninist ideological premises Jin concludes, "The relative shrinking of obstructive capacity of world markets is to be expected in the 1990s as nations will all encourage exports and restrict imports."

Another major factor that will increase rivalry is disintegration of the former Soviet Union which means "removal of the glue cementing Western unity," thus reducing the possibility of coordination and compromise. Jin believes, "The scramble for the political leading role already exists among America, Europe and Japan." Without providing statistics about how these trends will operate over the coming 20 to 30 years, Jin concludes, "In sum, rivalry and contention among the three economic power centers of America, Europe and Japan promise to replace U.S.-Soviet contention and the arms race as an all-important world issue in the 1990s."

A second important article that also goes beyond the vagueness of most articles appeared in the same Shanghai journal in July 1996 confirming Jin's forecast that the major powers will approach equality in GNP in the early 21st century. Then the author continues to explore this trend by suggesting boldly that the United States will not only lose its status as a superpower, but by 2020 or so America's relative decline will no longer permit it even to be an equal to the other four major world powers. Rather, America's decline will render it merely a regional power.

To sum up Jin's bizarre misperception, the United States will in the future lose its powerful alliances with German and Japan, lose its global prominence, and descend into fierce rivalries with its former allies with

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the same degree of hostility so as to "replace US-Soviet contention and the arms race." Only China will remain above this fray.

TWO SOURCES OF CHINA'S PECULIAR ASSESSMENTS

A major influence on Chinese assessments has been traditional Chinese statecraft. Many Western scholars have pointed out similarities between the world view of China's post-1949 leadership

SOURCES OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE STATECRAFT

- Sun Tzu Assessment Methods
- Seven Military Classics
- The "General Mirror"
- The 36 Stratagems

and past imperial leaders. However, until recently it has not been clear just how the concepts of traditional Chinese statecraft have been transmitted to the new generation. Books and articles published to commemorate Chairman Mao's 100th birth day and extensive interviews with senior Chinese leaders who knew Mao well have suggested that Mao and Deng Xiaoping may have learned much about the history of Chinese statecraft from a number of ancient texts they studied intensively. One of these texts was apparently the only book Mao took with him in 1935 on the one-year Long March. Today, large bookstores in Beijing sell both a popularized version and the original classic General Mirror to Aid Government.

Little is known about how much direct influence traditional Chinese statecraft may have on China's military strategy and perceptions. This question has not been a subject for study in the mainstream of the China field. Nevertheless, the possible continuing importance of these ancient texts is suggested by the fact that PLA research institutes continue to publish studies of the contemporary relevance of ancient strategic theories such as Seven Military Classics. None of these PLA studies has been translated into English. The quarterly journal of the Academy of Military Science publishes several articles in each issue on the subject of ancient strategy and its relationship to modern warfare. Such articles often appear side by side with articles about the potential Revolution in Military Affairs. The classics of Sun Tzu and other ancient Chinese writers are required reading for senior officers at China's mid-career military schools. A

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recent book by a PLA General summarizes how a course about Sun Tzu that was taught at the Academy of Military Science about how to adapt Sun Tzu's techniques for assessing military balances and the security environment.

A second major source of influence is Marxism. China's leaders still use Marxist-Leninist premises, but Chinese traditional statecraft has modified the way Sino-Marxism has developed. Obviously, China is no carbon copy of the former Soviet Union, and an

Deng Xiaoping borrowed key concepts from Soviet liberal authors in the 1970s without attribution to the USSR:

- A multipolar world is emerging capitalism will endure for decades
- A scientific and technological revolution is affecting national power
- National interests affect international relations more than class conflict
- A peaceful era is possible major nuclear war is unlikely
- The international correlation of forces must include factors beyond military power

important issue in the Sino-Soviet dispute was always how to interpret Marxist-Leninism. Because of the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute, Western specialists on China may be forgiven for largely neglecting the influence Soviet models have had on Chinese strategic thinking and organizational structure. After all, the dispute between these two nuclear powers was sufficiently grave that they shed blood in armed clashes on their disputed border and arrayed hundreds of thousands of troops against each other for nearly two decades. Yet newly available materials from China suggest that Soviet influence was an important factor, particularly in the 1950s and again in the 1980s, in establishing both the intellectual and organizational frameworks that Chinese leaders use to analyze the future security environment.

There is some evidence from both Chinese and Russian sources to demonstrate that understanding Chinese perceptions of the future may be assisted by insights from earlier analyses of how the former Soviet Union perceived its security environment, and how Soviet defense doctrine was decided. Scholarship on Soviet defense strategy has been recently re-examined in light of newly available Soviet archives and

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interviews with Soviet senior defense officials.¹³ The consensus among Western scholars of the former Soviet Union was that internal factors—leadership changes, technological developments, the economy, and bureaucratic politics in Moscow—were somewhat more important than external factors such as changes in NATO strategy, shifts in U.S. military doctrine, the rise of a perceived threat from China, and various military crises in which the Soviet Union was involved. Western scholarly studies of Soviet military doctrine and strategy relied mainly on articles in restricted Soviet military journals, such as *Military Thought*, as well as speeches and articles by senior military leaders.

Western specialists on Soviet military affairs in the 1960s and 1970s began to have access to both Soviet written materials and interviews with knowledgeable Soviet military officers. China began to 'open up' this way after 1985, but closed down again after the June 4, 1989 incident. Western studies of Soviet military thought emphasized that the pseudo-scientific terminology used by Soviet writers was significant, and the Chinese vocabulary for analyzing military matters seems to have borrowed heavily from Soviet terms which have no American counterparts. The Soviet claim to "military science" generated a complex taxonomy and a definition of "doctrine" unfamiliar to Americans. These conceptual and terminological distinctions originally made by the Soviets had specific organizational implications for how the process of changing and developing military doctrine could be allowed to take place. It was not up to individual officers or professors to put forward their best ideas for free wheeling debates. Instead, Soviet authors stressed that the Politburo of the Soviet Communist Party ultimately determined the nature of Soviet military doctrine based on its internal political-military calculations using the "scientific" guidance of Marxist-Leninism. According to the Soviet military encyclopedia issued in the name of the Ministry of Defense by the General Staff Academy, military doctrine had both a political and a "military-technical" aspect.

For understanding future warfare and the future security environment, the use of Soviet military science has a unique aspect in that the analysis military-technical developments must almost always

¹³ John Hines, et. al., Interviews with Soviet Officers, Draft Report, BDM, Volume 2.

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include the notion of "dialectics" in analyzing technological influence on military doctrine. According to both Soviet and Chinese authors, the operation over time of "dialectics" will more or less automatically change the nature of warfare quite drastically as a completely new synthesis is formed from the clash of thesis and antithesis. To examine the future of warfare, a vital task of military science is to anticipate and to identify the "dialectical" arrival of "military-technical revolutions." These military-technical revolutions are not produced by the insight of a genius, nor are they discovered by a genius. They occur with a certain historical inevitability as science and technology progress forward. Military strategists must therefore be on the lookout diligently to detect an approaching military technical revolution because it will require the re-design of obsolete military doctrine. The influence of Soviet military science is one of several factors which seems to incline Chinese military authors toward accepting with enthusiasm the concept of a revolution in military affairs that the United States will be unable to exploit as rapidly as other major nations.

LONGER TERM SCENARIOS OF CONFLICTS CAUSED BY MISPERCEPTIONS

The above list reflects issues for the decade or so ahead. However, for the period that the Chinese RMA authors are addressing scenarios and field experiments would have to be developed that assume really radical changes in the nature of warfare (as described by the Chinese RMA advocates) against a nation whose economy and therefore defense spending could equal or exceed our own. The kinds of scenarios that would test U.S. capabilities would have to identify how Chinese misperceptions might come into play and perhaps lead to conflict or types of warfighting that would not be otherwise anticipated.

Five illustrative scenarios could be simulated in the style of XPATH multiyear games or in more traditional conflict simulations. Of course, these five scenarios are not inevitable, but they are plausible in light of the Chinese predisposition to misperception. The potential damage these conflicts could impose on the United States would be greater if U.S. leaders are surprised by Chinese actions that may be taken on the basis of what seem to Americans as non-rational premises. U.S. defense planning scenarios may tend to omit major conflicts that seem

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quite likely to the Chinese unless U.S. planners take into account Chinese perceptions of the causes of future conflicts.

These five scenarios are illustrative and do not exhaust Chinese views of likely future wars.

- *Miscalculation in a Taiwan Straits crisis.* A Chinese leadership prone to miscalculation of U.S. intentions and capabilities could decide to strike pre-emptively against U.S. naval forces in the area of Taiwan in the mistaken belief that the consequences of attacking U.S. forces in a limited fashion would not bring disastrous retaliation against China. Chinese publications have discussed pre-emptive surprise attacks on command centers as a key element of future warfare. U.S. concepts of rational deterrence tend to rule out this type of scenario as fundamentally "irrational" and therefore not worth preparing for.

- *Miscalculation in a Korean crisis.* If the North Korean regime collapses or "implodes" and U.S. forces are invited by South Korea to assist in maintaining stability in northern Korea, China could well miscalculate the purpose

MILITARY CONSEQUENCES OF MISPERCEPTIONS

- Accidental War with China
- U.S. Regional Deterrence May Fail
- Future Korean Unification Crisis
- US Suffers Surprises
- Anti-US Weapons Systems

of such a U.S. military advance to be hostile to China, and therefore attempt to shield or even re-install the North Korean leadership in power in Pyongyang by force. U.S. specialists at present tend to rule out such a pre-emptive Chinese use of force inside North Korea in part because it would be "irrational" and in part because of a common U.S. view that Chinese intervention in the Korean War in 1950 was caused by Washington's failure to heed Chinese warnings. New Chinese materials published since 1988 have undermined this view and instead demonstrate a remarkable set of Chinese misperceptions at the time based on a false belief in an imminent American attack on China from Taiwan, Korea and Indochina.

- *Miscalculation in the South China Sea.* Chinese military authors complain that it is unwise to continue to accommodate both

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Vietnamese military occupation of nearly 20 Chinese-claimed islands and the destruction in 1995 of Chinese structures in an area claimed by the Philippines. No successful oil exploration has been reported yet. As Chinese national energy requirements increase, Chinese misperceptions could bring about pre-emptive use of force against both nations that occupy Chinese territorial claims and against any U.S. forces misperceived to be supporting them against China. U.S. specialists have emphasized that it would be "irrational" for China to pre-emptively use force in these circumstances and that a drastic provocation of China would be required before Chinese would use force in a maritime boundary dispute. In fact, China's threshold may be lower.

- *Miscalculation during two simultaneous major regional contingencies.* Sun Tzu focuses on the advantage of attacking when the opponent is distracted by another conflict or when his alliance(s) are weakened. Interviews with Chinese officers conducted for this report show that China has considered the advantages of taking action when an opponent is facing another conflict. Indeed, China's attack on India in 1962 has been analyzed in terms of its relationship to the simultaneous Cuban Missile Crisis. Could this be tested in a plausible scenario? In order to be able one day to encourage a diversion in the Persian Gulf (or at least to benefit from such a diversion), China may decide to export a set of military capabilities to tie down U.S. power projection forces in the Gulf by marketing systems designed to concentrate on the specific vulnerabilities of the most important weapons systems and C³I of the United States. Although they would like to buy them once developed for sale, Iran, Libya, North Korea and Iraq alone have little chance to develop such systems. A determined China (perhaps with Russian help) could do so, and assist rogue states as a consequence of China's dangerous misperception that the United States is hostile to China's Marxist regime and seeks its overthrow or dismemberment. U.S. specialists tend to assume that China sells weapons to rogue or anti-U.S. regimes mainly for profit, not to form an anti-American coalition that could be activated to divert U.S. attention and resources and provoke two simultaneous regional contingencies. In fact, Chinese perceptions of U.S. hostility would make such a course of action desirable.

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- *Miscalculation about energy supplies and need to pre-emptively seize them.* Chinese misperceptions about a future severe shortage of energy resources could help provoke an unnecessary and aggressive nationalistic competition for energy sources that would bring accidental war in areas where Chinese leaders believe falsely that other major powers seek to "contain" China and to deny Chinese growth requirements. U.S. specialists' writings assume wars for energy supplies would be irrational and obsolete because a global, fungible market for energy makes it unwise and even foolish to use force to obtain energy resources in the future which can always and easily be purchased on the open market. Chinese interest in the energy supplies of Siberia or Central Asia is therefore not seen as a cause of war. A scenario based on severe energy shortages could test the effects of China's potential for miscalculations about the future security of international energy supplies.

In addition to these five plausible scenarios of outright military conflict, Chinese misperception has the potential to damage U.S. interests in other ways. Four important examples are China's lobbying Russia against any NATO

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF MISPERCEPTIONS

- Nuclear Proliferation
- Chinese Veto in UN Security Council
- Obstacles to START 3 limits
- Opposition to NATO expansion
- Possible future anti-US coalitions

expansion, China's opposition to U.N. peace-keeping operations, Chinese tolerance for weapons proliferation, and Chinese skepticism about participation in START-related nuclear arms control (until the U.S. and Russia reduce to below 1,000 warheads). China's misperceptions can create important obstacles to U.S. goals.

ENHANCING U.S. ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE CHINESE MISPERCEPTIONS

Without providing any specific budgetary recommendations, this report suggests that additional resources may strengthen the impact of U.S. government efforts to modify China's most important misperceptions. There are obvious obstacles besides lack of resources. For example, more work would be needed to understand the process by which China makes strategic assessments. Many key Chinese institutions do not have American counterparts; some important institutions have been left out of exchange programs. At the present time, the problem of Chinese misperceptions has not been deemed important enough to justify a senior level management review by the Defense Department and the military services. Nor has the Congress held hearings or otherwise addressed whether to fund further efforts to reduce Chinese misperceptions. It seems likely that such high level reviews will not occur until a major event precipitated by Chinese misperceptions highlights the problem. In the meantime, little can be done in part because there is no single U.S. government office responsible for this issue. During the Cold War, there were both federal and academic efforts to monitor Soviet perceptions, but this has not been the case to date for China.

When the appropriate time arrives for re-consideration of U.S. programs, at least these common sense steps could be reviewed:

- U.S.-PRC military to military exchanges could be designed to provide direct rebuttals of the most dangerous premises held by the Chinese military. In order to permit U.S. officers to challenge dangerous Chinese premises, translated summaries of perceptions held by the Chinese military could be distributed to Americans involved in exchange programs with China.
- Past experience with military to military exchanges could be reviewed to identify the most important channels of influence. New "targets" for military to military exchanges could be identified among institutions in China that assess the military balance.
- Senior service colleges could initiate annual exchanges or conferences with their Chinese counterparts that would focus on improving the realism of Chinese assessments.

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- Unclassified, carefully selected U.S. models and simulations for assessing military power could be provided to the appropriate Chinese authors to enhance understanding of U.S. deterrence capabilities. Operations Research methods (OR) in use by the Chinese military which may account for their consistently underestimating U.S. military capability could be improved to reduce dangerous miscalculation without also enhancing the PLA's combat capability.
- Suggestions could be solicited from Pacific Command, Seventh Fleet, U.S. Forces in Korea, U.S. Forces in Japan, and others for new approaches to modify Chinese ideological views and to enhance Chinese assessments of future U.S. military capabilities.
- Selected unclassified materials could be shared with influential Chinese to reduce Chinese misperceptions of U.S. deterrent capabilities to include specific rebuttals of articles by Chinese authors on U.S. weakness. New subjects could be introduced into the "strategic dialogue" conducted by U.S. Cabinet Secretaries to include subjects such as enhancing Chinese understanding of the positive benefits of the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty and other misperceptions that Chinese authors have raised publicly to "prove" U.S. hostility toward China.

Twenty-five years have passed since the United States and China signed the Shanghai Communique, which symbolized the end of a period of two decades of American "containment" of China. Extensive Sino-American exchanges and "engagement" have softened China's hostility and suspicion of the United States during those 25 years, but it is remarkable how little China's fundamental perceptions of world politics have actually changed. It would not be prudent to expect with certainty that another 25 years of Sino-American "strategic dialogue" and military-to-military exchanges will completely eliminate the dangerous Chinese misperceptions identified in this report. Optimistic observers may well hope that such American programs can become far more intense and more carefully targeted in the future. However, China seems unlikely to accept without reservation such assertive U.S. efforts to modify its most dearly held ideological beliefs about the world. These same observers must also overcome the obstacle posed by the relatively low priority placed on "engagement" with China by a series of U.S. presidents compared to the annual visits to our European

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allies in NATO. Summits are far more frequent with our allies than with China.

In the meantime, if China's dangerous misperceptions persist, a cautious approach would include "engagement" as well as consideration of appropriate steps by DOD and the intelligence community to anticipate potential miscalculations by China (including the use of force) in ways that could well surprise future American observers. The five conflict scenarios mentioned above represent only a preliminary step in an analytical process that ought to include further study of China's potential for miscalculation. It may well be that the Chinese leadership for some time to come cannot be successfully deterred by the United States because of the great cultural gap between the two countries.

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